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ABSTRACT

This paper provides information on the following aspects of the kindergarten program in Kuwait (Southeast Asia): goals, objectives and background; curriculum organization and content; teacher training; parent/school relationships; and program evaluation. The first chapter provides a brief history of the growth of kindergartens in Kuwait. Chapter II deals with the goals and objectives of the kindergartens. Chapter III, which comprises the bulk of the paper, focuses on curriculum content, materials and activities. Various components of the curricula (language, mathematics, science, social studies, arts, physical education and religious education) are described in detail. Individual and group activities, activity clubs and the daily schedule are also discussed. Chapter IV describes preservice and inservice teacher training and assessment. Chapter V briefly discusses parent/school activities. Chapter VI evaluates the entire kindergarten program, specifying aspects which have a negative effect on the work in kindergarten and need to be changed. (CM)

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METHODS USED FOR KINDERGARTENS IN THE STATE OF KUWAIT

by
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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

FOREWORD

by Edith W. King

University of Denver

Nasmah Al Abdulla is currently a graduate student at the School of Education, Univeristy of Denver studying in the Early Childhood Education - Supervision and Curriculum program. She served in the Ministry of Education, Kindergarten Department before coming to study in the United States at the University of Denver. She took her previous work in Kuwait graduating from Kuwait University.

During her coursework at the University of Denver, she visited early childhood programs in the Denver metropolitan area. In reviewing the literature on early childhood education Ms. Al Abdulla recognized a serious lack of information in the United States on early childhood programs in the Middle East generally and on Kuwait, specifically. This paper is an attempt to rectify this situation and provide up-to-date , pertinent background on kindergarten program, curriculum, teacher training and future planning for early childhood education in at least one of the states in the Middle East.

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INTRODUCTION

Kuwait is a small Arab country in Southeast Asia, at the north end of the Arabian Gulf. It is a little smaller than the state of New Jersey. Most people of Kuwait are Arabs and Moslems. Arabic is the official language, and Islam is the state religion.

Kuwait is now one of the richest and most progressive countries in the world. With the wealth gained by selling oil, Kuwait's rulers have turned the desert into a prosperous welfare state.

Education in Kuwait fits the ancient adage of the prophet Mohammed who said, "Seek knowledge even if you have to go to China to find it..." and Kuwaiti children of all ages are learning and receiving skills and knowledge in the most enlightened form from kindergarten through college absolutely free, with free transportation, free lunches, and free medical care.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for any kind of education in Kuwait. This ministry has separate departments for each level. The Kindergarten Department in this ministry is responsible for planning, organizing, and providing different services for kindergarten schools. This department was established in 1954.

I. Beginning of Kindergartens and their Growth in Kuwait:

This kind of educational institution was first set up in Kuwait when education became compulsory. It started with two kindergartens in 1954 and 1955 as an experiment. Children of both sexes were accepted. The following schedule will show the growth of this kind of educational service.[1]

It is noted from the following data that kindergartens have undergone remarkable growth, which reflects the increasing concern of the government with this kind of service. This growth is represented in the following:

1) The noticeable growth in a relatively short period which started from 1954-55 in the number of kindergartens in Kuwait, and accordingly, the number of children who go there.

2) Improvement in the standard of services. Classes are not overcrowded any more. (In 1954-55 each class contained about 34 children, whereas in 1977-78 a class contained 24 children.) The average number is 25 children per class.

4) Kindergartens started with 22 children for each teacher. This situation continued in the sixties. By the seventies, the number declined to 16 children for every teacher, and in 1977-78 it became 13 per single teacher.*

All these indicators reflect clearly the extent of the great concern and attention which the government gives to

[1]The Annual Statistics and Reports of the Ministry of Education, 1978.

School Years	Children		Kindergartens		Classes		Teachers		
	No.	Growth	No.	Ch/Kg	No.	Ch/Class	No.	Teacher /Class	Teacher/ Children
1954-55	376	376	2	188	11	34	17	1.5	22
1960-61	4,543	4,167	20	227	131	35	192	1.5	24
1964-65	8,806	4,263	30	294	259	34	395	1.5	22
1070-71	12,830	4,024	44	292	474	27	789	1.7	16
1971-72	12,970	140	46	282	504	26	834	1.7	16
1972-73	12,786	(184)	49	261	543	24	882	1.6	14
1973-74	11,959	(827)	53	226	561	21	971	1.7	12
1974-75	12,582	623	52	242	556	23	1001	1.8	13
1975-76	14,457	1,875	51	283	561	26	1003	1.8	14
1976-77	14,860	403	54	275	614	24	1137	1.8	13
1977-78	15,410	550	56	275	646	24	1169	1.8	13

these kinds of services for children below the primary stage.

II. Goals and Objectives of Kindergartens in Kuwait:

The goals and objectives of kindergarten schools in Kuwait can be classified as follows:

1) Cognitive and language development;

2) Social and emotional development;

3) Sensory-motor development.

The emphasis in the area of cognitive and language development for kindergarten children is to achieve some of the following. A child will be able to:

1) Perceive some concepts pertaining to his age and level of maturation, such as place, time, height, weight, quantity, male and female.

2) Perceive and understand relationships, similarities, and differences among things.

3) Classify and complete a chain of numbers (1-10).

4) Identify geometric shapes, sets, one to one matching and measurement.

5) Perceive and understand some simple relationships between some causes and their effects.

6) Be aware of his environment.

7) Acquire essential skills of observation.

8) Increase his vocabulary.

9) Express himself verbally.

10) Develop some pre-reading and pre-writing skills.

11) Identify the five pillars of Islam.

12) Identify simple facts about Mohammed's life.

13) Memorize simple verses from the Koran.

The emphasis in the area of social and emotional development for the kindergarten child is to achieve the following:

1) Develop faith in God, the Islamic religion, and Arabic and Islamic values and traditions.

2) Feel good about himself, feel that he is important.

3) Develop a willingness to explore new things.

4) Experience success and failure, criticism and praise.

5) Interact meaningfully with other people. Communicate with adults as well as peers.

6) Acquire the ability to talk, to express himself clearly.

7) Develop self-reliance and respect of rules and orders.

8) Develop a sense of cooperation and positive participation in social life.

9) Enjoy books, the feeling that reading is fun and interesting.

10) Identify self, family, community, and roles in the community.

11) Develop strong motivations toward success, school, and learning.

The emphasis in the area of sensory-motor development for the kindergarten child is to develop the following:

1) To develop laterality, kinesthesis, directionality and other sensory-motor skills pertaining to the child's age.

2) To develop coordination between eyes, hands and words.

3) To develop body balance and flexibility.

III. Curriculum Content, Materials, and Activities:

The content of the curriculum, the activities, and the materials and the scheduling of time in the kindergarten program are all directed to accomplish the previous objectives. These objectives are determined by the Kindergarten Department, and every kindergarten is obligated to achieve them. The Department of Education also provides the kindergartens with the policy outline for the curriculum; however, the methods that are used to implement this curriculum differ from one school to another.

In this paper, I will describe briefly the kindergarten program and the methods that are used in teaching some of its contents. ~~The Sources:~~ Since I have not found any English

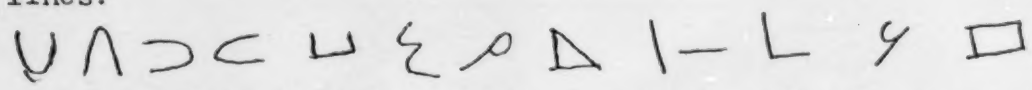
sources written on this subject, I will depend on the books, researches, reports, and policy statements that are issued by the Kindergarten Department and also on my own experience and knowledge as an administrator in this department.

A. The language component:

The process of language development includes two parts: 1) Training in skills that are necessary for reading and writing; and 2) Development of the child's verbal expression and an increase in vocabulary.

The first step in training in skills that are necessary for reading and writing is to teach the child to relate random line drawings to letter symbols. So, the child is encouraged to draw any kind of lines in any direction he wants.

Secondly, the child is going to distinguish between these lines: Horizontal; vertical; broken, diagonal; their directions - up, down, left, right, and a combination of these lines:



Training in these skills helps the child in learning the Arabic letters and numbers such as ١, ب, ج, م, ل, ٤, ٣

Thirdly, the child is going to use the different instructional materials in drawing these lines. Montessori's instructional materials help very much in learning the vertical

and the horizontal lines and in drawing some geometric shapes which exist in some Arabic letters and numbers.

Fourthly, the child is trained to know the similarities and the differences between pictures, shapes, and finally words. For example:

1) Underline the word that is different:

حمد حمد أخذ حمد

2) Match between these words:

رز	رمل
رعد	رز
رمل	رعد

~~Reading requires the ability to recognise~~.

Fifthly, the child is trained to read some words. Children of age 4 to 5 are going to learn to read 10 to 15 words, while children of age 5 to 6 are going to learn 30 to 40 words.

Sixthly, children of age 5 to 6 only are trained to write. The child writes the words he wants. Sands, clay, pearls, felt pens and different instructional materials are used to serve this purpose. Words that are presented to children to write are simple and short.

In a field study done by the Department on the Kindergarten program in 1976, the research workers found that in the five kindergartens they studied, the method the teachers used in teaching reading and writing is to use the children's own words, the words they use to describe any experience they have, as what they have seen on a particular trip made by the

school, or a TV program. Thus, teachers give great importance to conversation and questions and answers on this level. Teachers also use games in training the children how to read and write.

The other part of the language component is to help the child to develop his verbal expression and to increase his vocabulary. Stories, songs, conversations, questions and answers, and the library are the means for developing the child's language. As said above, teachers give great importance to conversation and questions and answers about what the children experience so that the child will speak and express his ideas verbally. Usually, when children engage in an activity, they like to talk about it. Then the teacher could use their words in teaching them reading and writing.

I found a similar approach in the U.S. when I had the opportunity to visit some schools in the Denver area. I noticed that at the Asbury pre-school, in order to encourage the children to express themselves verbally, the teacher showed them some pictures and asked them to describe what they were seeing, while in the Independance Elementary School, the approach that was used in writing was to write the child's words and ask him to copy them. For example, when I was there, the teacher asked the children what each would like to say to

to his mother if he wanted to write her a letter. She wrote the children's words and the children copied them.

Stories also increase the vocabulary of the children, and telling them helps the children arrange the events in a logical way. There is a small library in every class from which the children can choose the books they want in the free activity period. Also, each class has two periods during the week to go to the school library where the children can find more books about different subjects. The teacher can explain the contents of some of the books by the pictures in them and the children acquire new vocabulary words in this way.

Songs also contribute to the development of the child's vocabulary, and they are used during the different activities.

B. The Math Component:

The mathematical component includes:

1) Sets and one to one matching.

2) Whole numbers and rational counting (1-20).

3) Ordinal numbers.

4) Numerals: conceptualization, reading and writing (1-20).

5) Geometric shapes.

6) Adding and subtracting.

7) Measurement.

8) Coins.

9) Classification; grouping and regrouping.

Some of the learning experiences that are adapted by some teachers to teach numeral conceptualization are to ask the children to count the items in different sets of objects such as balls, pens and flowers, or to count the number of things that are drawn on a card, and to write the number beside them. Also, the teachers use different materials like colored pearls, seeds, pens, artificial fruits, balls, cubes, and other instructional materials to help the children learn the value of each number. In addition, analyzing these numbers as to their components (8=5+3, 4+4, 2+6, 1+7, 8+0) helps greatly in learning their values and leads to rational counting. For example, in analyzing the number 8, the teacher can divide the children into unequal groups. The children count the persons in each group and write the number on the blackboard; then they start to think of how many children each group needs to become eight persons, and they write the number needed for each group. In this way they learn the component of the number 8.

Children learn how to add and subtract by different games during which they learn the symbols (+, -, =). Songs are also used to teach children adding and subtracting, so that they find fun in their learning.

The concept of one to one matching is taught in different ways. One of the ways that is used is to ask the children to prepare the table for dinner. So, the children match between the number of people who are going to eat and the number of plates, forks, spoons and knives they will need for each person.

Different instructional materials, especially Montessori's, are used to teach children shapes and sizes in addition to the materials the teacher develops by herself.

I had the opportunity to visit a class where the teacher was teaching the value of various bills and coins to the children. The teacher brought bills which were dinars, half dinars, quarter dinars, and silver pieces which were 100 filses, 50 filses, 20 filses, 10 filses, 5 filses and 1 fils. They discussed the value of each piece, and although the children did not know the exact value of the bills, they realized that they were more valuable than the silver pieces.

I believe that the children gained much from this experience, not only in math, but in realizing some facts that are very useful in their lives. The discussion on money led to whether we can use our money in other countries, what we would do if we had to travel to other countries, and what kind of money was used in other Arabic and neighboring countries. They also discussed the pictures on the coins and what they mean. Finally, the children participated in a game which

included buying and selling things where they solve some mathematical problems like adding and subtraction.

C. The Science Component:

I. The five senses:

a. distinguish between colors, sizes, lengths, and areas.

b. distinguish between various sounds such as animals, people, birds, machines, and other natural phenomena (thunder, rain, wind) and their intensities.

c. distinguish between nice and bad smells.

d. distinguish between salt, sweet, bitter, sour.

e. distinguish between what is soft and rough.

II. Animals: Pets, fishes, birds, insects, jungle animals.

III. Plants: Trees, seeds, vegetables, flowers.

IV. Natural phenomena: Seasons, planets.

V. The human body: The parts of the human body, the needs of the human body, ~~how to protect it~~, the importance of immunization.

The development of the child's sensory perceptions is a part of the child's daily activities. It is not limited to a special area. In the language experiences as well as in math, in arts, sciences, and social studies, the child has some experiences that develop his sensory perceptions.

Nevertheless, the teachers create some learning experiences that are directed especially to accomplish this goal. One of the teachers in a school I visited asked the children to compare sticks that had different colors and length in order to develop the visual perception of the children. Actually, the use of such things as building blocks, matching and distinguishing between the similarities and differences of things, constantly contribute to the development of a child's sensory perceptions as well as to the development of his motor and conceptual abilities.

Some other sensory experiences that have the goal of developing the taste, touch, and smell senses that I have seen are to put the child's hands, one in cold water and the other in warm water, and have the child compare between a real fish and a plastic fish in their texture and smell, or to have him compare the taste of lemon juice to the taste of milk.

A zoo which contains domestic animals is considered to be the best place for children to know the animals and birds which exist in their environment. Thus, every kindergarten has a little zoo. Since they are available in every school, the teacher usually lets the children discover by themselves some facts about these animals and birds by observation and examination. The teacher can ask some questions to make the children notice some physical attributes the

animals have. Stories, songs, and play acting are utilized to explain to the children how these animals live, what they eat, how they breed, and what their advantages to the people are. Children like to copy the animals' movements and sounds; in addition, animals are an interesting subject for children to draw and make figures of.

Children learn about the plants in a simple and practical way. They plant some seeds, onions and potatoes, near their classes, and they take care of them and observe their growth. This experience teaches them what the plants need in order to live, like water and air; also they learn the parts of the plant such as roots, stems and leaves. The garden of the school also contributes to their knowledge about plants. Moreover, it gives them the opportunity to see the different flowers and to distinguish between their smells.

Rain, thunder, heat, cold and other natural phenomena are described in stories and songs to make them interesting subjects for the children. They are also observed as they occur naturally, and the children describe their properties.

D. The Social Studies Component:

1) Acquaintance with the school.
2) Self and friend.
3) Family.
4) Community and national and religious celebrations.

5) Roles.

6) Social institutions.

7) Transportation.

To become acquainted with the school and with the people inside the school is one thing that our kindergartens emphasize. The children have the opportunity to get to know each other in the morning activity period, this is when the whole school meets. Teachers, directors, and other people who work in the kindergarten join these morning activities where they salute the flag, sing, dance and play different games. The children are also introduced to the different places in their schools like the garden, library, restaurant, zoo, and they are trained how to behave in each place.

Plays and role playing have a great effect on the students' understanding of the roles in the community. Acting out scenes like home, hospitals, post office, transportation, and other social institutions teaches the students a lot about their society.

In a field study that was done in 1976, all the kindergartens that were studied had the gulf soccer cup as a project for the social studies because this was held in Kuwait at that time. The children learned many things through this project. Subjects like science, math, language and arts were all associated with this subject. For example, the children knew the

countries that are located on the Arabian Gulf, which are Arabic countries, and which are not, their customs, what the people wear, and what the important things in these countries are. They learned how to use the map as they tried to find out the location of each country; they also recognized the flag of each country. In the language activities, the children tried to read and write the names of these countries. In the science activities, they studied the kind of fish that live in the Gulf waters and how to fish. In arts they drew the different clothes worn in these countries.

E. The Fine Motor Skills Component:

a. Drawing

b. Painting

c. Cutting and pasting

d. Modeling

e. Construction

The methods that are used in developing the fine motor skills are geared to:

1) Develop freedom of expression. The child draws, paints, or constructs whatever he wants, using different materials.

2) Develop discipline: limit what the child will do in a special activity. This is done especially when the children

have a project in any subject, such as science, language, math or social studies. The children, for example, study about animals in science, and then they can draw, make figures of, and paint the kinds of animals they studied in the arts activity.

Usually, the arts activities are done outdoors, especially when the teacher wants the students to express their own feelings. The garden of the school and the little zoo are good places for the children to use their imagination and express themselves in their drawings. Then the imaginative expression through pictures is used to reinforce verbal expression when the teacher asks the children to describe their drawings.

Some of the works that the children do in their arts activities are, drawing using crayons or water colors, printing pictures using potatoes and wax, cutting and pasting, sewing, especially canvas, making paper or fabric flowers, animals or fruits using different materials like cellophane paper, wires, sponges, yarn and clay.

The class is usually decorated with the childrens' work for a period of time or until new work is done. Some of the best work is chosen to decorate the school and for the Kindergarten Arts Exhibition, which occurs once a year. For national and religious celebrations, cards are made by the children to give to their parents with good wishes.

F. Physical Education Component:

It is divided into:

1) Activities that are practiced inside the classroom.

2) Outdoor activities.

Practicing the first kind of activities helps in conditioning and strengthening muscles, both big and small. It also helps in visual-muscular coordination. Examples: musical chairs, sweeping the classroom, acting like birds or animals and imitating them, using carpentry tools, painting, and playing games. In fact, the different activities that the child practices during the day, such as using clay, scissors, and the pearls, cutting and pasting, contructing, and playing with water contribute in one way or another in the development of the child's muscles, especially the muscles of his fingers.

The second kind of physical exercises can be practiced while making use of the equipment provided like balls, rings, ropes, bowling, and the different equilment that is in the playground such as the swing, slide, monkey bars and the see-saw.

In addition, there are many exercises that help develop the children's muscular responses, especially in relation to other responses such as the nervous and visual. For example, children have to catch objects or other children, roll on the ground, or imitate the movements of tree branches in the

wind. In addition, they practice telling stories through movement, relying on their bodies to communicate meaning. Finally, there are many competitions sponsored by the teacher such as musical chairs and bowling.

G. Religion Component:

1) The five pillars of Islamic religion.

2) Simple verses from the Koran.

3) Simple facts about Mohammed's life.

4) Moral values of Islamic religion.

There is a great emphasis in Kuwait that the children should be exposed to religious experiences at an early age. Children should be brought up according to the moral values of Islam, and should know how to practice the Islamic five pillars, such as praying and fasting. Accordingly, the children in kindergartens start their day by telling some verses from the Koran and saying some prayers.

To realize that there is a great power who creates this universe is not easy for children whose thinking is still limited to the physical properties of things. However, the teachers in kindergartens try to use the natural phenomena such as the sky, rain, sun and wind and ask the children questions about them to make the think of God as a creator of these things.

Mohammed's life is told to the children as a story, so that they can enjoy it. They will know from this story that God chose Mohammed as a prophet, and that the Koran is the God's book. The Koran was given to Mohammed so that he could tell it to his people, for them to follow. Therefore, everyone should know how to read the Koran. And that is why they have to know some of its verses. However, the verses that are explained to the children and that they are asked to rehearse are only four, and they are very short (usually two lines) and very simple.

The moral values are taught to the children through stories and events that happened to Mohammed, his successors, and his opponents. For example, to teach the children to forgive and tolerate, the teacher tells them a very important event that happened to Mohammed. After his victory against a group of unbelievers in the battle of "Fateh Mecca", Mohammed gathered the defeated army and asked them what they expected him to do. The fighters answered that they believed that he was generous and kind. So, he said to them, "Go, you are free".

H. Individual and Group Activities:

The day in kindergarten starts at 8:00 a.m. in winter, and at 7:30 a.m. in summer. The first half hour of the day is

used for individual activities, and the second half hour is for group activities.

In the first period, the child has many things to do. He has to water his plants, clean his desk and chair of dust, re-arrange his things, or complete his work from the day before. He can also play with toys, look at pictures in a book, or maybe talk to the others. Teachers, during this period, always encourage the children to tell about what happened to them and to share their experiences with the class. In this kind of activity, many social and emotional objectives can be achieved. Responsibility, self reliance, and the feeling of acdeptance from the teacher and the class are some of them.

In the group activity period, all the children, the teachers, and the principal meet in a large hall. This period starts by telling some verses from the Koran and prayers for God. It is conventional in Moslem societies to start work by reading the Koran and saying some prayers. So, this period has socialization effect on children. After the prayers, the flag is saluted.

The rest period is spent in dancing, singing and playing games. This group activity offers the opportunity to all the children in the school to get to know each other as well as other people who work in the school. It is an opportunity that teaches children how to communicate with peers, as well

with adults, and also to develop a sense of cooperation and positive participation in social life. Moreover, as children have fun in this period with dancing, singing and playing games, they will start their work actively and happily, and they will develop strong motivations toward school, learning and success.

I. Activity Clubs:

The last period of the day in the kindergartens is utilized for activity clubs. The aim of this period is to develop the childrens' talents and skills. Moreover, this period is created to give children who have the same talents the chance to meet together.

It is rather difficult to find out the childrens' talents and hobbies when they are very young. A child in kindergarten needs a long time of experience and practice before his talents are discovered. Children who have distinctive talents and who are encouraged and taken care of at home are excluded from this rule. That is why the kindergartens consider it very important to give children a chance to practice and try different fields of experience and to allow them to choose and change activity clubs during the year. But, at the same time, it is essential for the child to stay in his club for a period long enough for him to develop his talents so that the teacher can follow up with him.

There are different clubs in kindergartens, such as:

1) Music group: it is the only stable group, i.e. children who join it stay in it until the end of the year.

2) Arts group: it is divided into two groups, drawing and painting, and handwork.

3) Theatre and acting group: this includes the dolls theatre and expression through modern dance.

4) Physical exercise group.

5) Library group: children who like reading colored stories where they can follow up the drawings of the story usually prefer to join this group.

6) Educational exercise groups: usually very young children like to join it, especially when there are sand pools, water pools, animal sheds provided on the site.

7) Birds and animals group: joining this group gives the children a chance to take care of them.

8) Agriculture activity: children who enjoy planting and playing with sand join this group. They can contribute to beautifying the school garden.

9) Scientific experiments or the young inventor group: the children can experiment on things like floating and sinking. There are very interesting and practical experiments on shapes, sizes and volumes of things like experiments attempting to collect things that can be inserted in a match

box, or putting things of different sizes (like marbles, stones, rice, salt, and beans inside a seive and shaking it to distinguish between small things that pass through holes and big ones that stay in the seive.

It is essential to keep a record with notes on the childrens' activities and improvements; this will help the teacher understand the children better.

J. Organizational Pattern:

The Kindergarten Department provides the schools with a sample of the daily schedule. However, this does not mean that every school should follow it. Some schools plan their own schedules because they have special conditions. In general, the department sample schedule is accepted by most of the schools. The following presents the daily schedule in the summer time:

7:30-8:00	Arrival and individual activities.
8:00-8:30	Group activities.
8:30-9:30	Work period.
9:30-10:15	Breakfast and recess.
10:15-11:15	Work period.
11:15-11:30	Snack.
11:30-12:00	Activity clubs.
12:00-12:15	Dismissal.

During winter the school day starts at 8:00 a.m. and ends at 12:45 p.m. The schools work six days during the week, from Saturday until Thursday. Thursday, which is the last day of the week, has dismissal before the snack period. Officially,

we work half day on Thursdays. Friday is in the weekend.

The previous schedule is supposed to have 29 work periods if we consider a single period to be 30 minutes. Thus, from Saturday through Wednesday, we have 25 work periods, and on Thursday we have four work periods. There is a teacher and a teacher's aid for each class. The teacher works for 19 periods, and the teacher's aid for 20 periods, divided between two classes; each class is ten periods.

The Kindergarten Department determines how many work periods should be devoted to each subject every week. The schedule is as follows:

Subject	No. Periods
Language	6
Math	4
Science	2
Social Studies	1
Religion	1
Arts	4
Physical Education	3
Music	2
Activity Clubs	5

Despite the schedule designed by the department, it is actually very difficult at the kindergarten level to assign limited periods for the different experiences, especially when the classwork is on a special project or unit. For example, in a field study that was done in 1976, the schools whose project was the Gulf Soccer Cup spent most of the week on social

studies learning experiences, whereas the department assigns one period for the social studies during the week. The research workers also mentioned that they found great differences between the schools in the number of periods that were designated for each activity. At that time, the number of periods devoted to language development varied between 4 and 11, and the number of periods devoted to arithmetic varied between 2 and 6.

Thus, there is great flexibility in scheduling at the actual school level to allow the teachers and the students to achieve the greatest benefit from various educational opportunities in the community. The schedule in the one school may vary from week to week, according to conditions and events in the community or the society at large, including such things as religious and civic celebrations.

IV. Teacher Training:

In the past, most kindergarten teachers in Kuwait were prepared in training colleges for four years, and students who completed the eighth grade could enter these colleges. Unfortunately, most of the students who enrolled in these colleges were either underachievers scholastically in the regular schools and sought a short way to finish their education, or were poor and entered these colleges in order to benefit from the money given to students by the government.

The government awarded financial grants to encourage students to enroll in these colleges. Moreover, these colleges were established to prepare teachers for elementary schools, and training for kindergarten teaching was not a formal part of the curriculum. Undoubtedly, there were many teachers who graduated from universities and work in kindergartens; however, they were not trained for teaching in kindergartens. The teachers who have trained formally for this level, and who work in Kuwait kindergartens are non-Kuwaiti teachers, mostly Palestinians, Egyptians, and Lebanese.

However, some changes have been initiated in the past few years. Two years ago, new institutions were established, and they adopted the training and preparation of teachers for kindergartens; unfortunately, there is still a tremendous need for qualified teachers at this time since the first group of teacher/students are just now graduating.

Therefore, the in-service training is an important requirement for kindergarten teachers and is given much consideration by the department. The kindergarten in-service program occurs four times during the school year, and lasts for four weeks each time, five hours daily. The maximum number of teachers enrolled in each program is 45. At the end of the year, 260 teachers are trained. The objectives of

this in-service program are for teachers to be able to:

1) Identify various approaches of teaching in kindergarten.

2) Develop the child's language processing skills.

3) Develop the child's mathematical concepts.

4) Offer a variety of science experiences.

5) Expose the child socially and yet help him develop independence.

6) Develop the child's fine motor skills.

The teachers who are enrolled in the in-service program are given written materials to be read two weeks before the program starts. These materials cover the above objectives. In the first week of the program, a discussion about the materials read and question and answer sessions will be held. Professional people in the department lead the discussion. In the last three weeks, the teachers practice teaching in different subjects, during which they apply what they have learned in the first week. In addition to the practice teaching, the students observe professionally trained teachers conduct lessons in the classroom.

The professionals follow a defined procedure to assess the student teachers. The practice teaching will be graded on a point system according to the different aspect of the process -- creativity, kind of activities, skills required

to learn, materials which provide a variety of activities -- and the student teacher's performance in each. Progress of the students is of major importance, and a record of this progress is kept throughout the program for each student. There is also some non-graded assessment such as that of group interaction and discussion and observation. Finally, the evaluation the trainees receive and their grades are turned into the office of the Kindergarten Department for records. But all teachers who complete the program are considered successful and given a certificate.

V. The Relation between Kindergartens and Home:

Meetings with mothers are considered an important part in the educational scheme in kindergartens, and one of the important factors that help in strengthening the relation between the homes and kindergartens, because kindergartens are also established as centers for enlightening mothers, especially after providing them with social workers, health supervisors, and doctors. The administration of the school encourages frequent meetings so that the kindergarten will be a real social and educational center for the environment surrounding it.

No doubt, such meetings play a very important educational role for both mothers and staff, and the benefit is great for children, especially when such meetings give every

person concerned a chance to express and suggest opinions and solutions.

A certain day of the week is fixed for the meeting. Mothers of children of one class are invited to visit the class in order to get acquainted with the various activities applied there. They have the chance to see the health and educational care provided for the children, and the up-to-date teaching methods designed to achieve a well-balanced growth and socially accepted good behavior. Mothers attend single or group meetings to get to know their children's performance. They also have the chance to visit the restaurant during the breakfast meal in addition to the music room and playground.

Exchange of opinions and problem-solving discussions in a friendly atmosphere occur during the mother's visit. The social worker will cooperate with the teacher to talk with mothers of troublesome children or children who have problems. They will discuss the reasons for such behavior and suggest solutions. Films are shown to help mothers understand how to deal with some of the problems they have with their children.

Doctors may also talk about the importance of medical care, the elements of good nutrition, and the importance of physical check-ups and immunization. Mothers also can get

help with some health problems their children have during this meeting.

VI. Evaluation of the Methods Used:

Kindergartens in Kuwait are considered to be the best schools on any educational level that exist there. There is always a great concern from the Kindergarten Department to apply up-to-date methods, and there are always studies to follow the problems in applying the new methods. Although kindergartens are considered as traditional schools in the methods they follow, they are not as structured as the elementary or other educational levels in Kuwait. As we have seen in the methods used in teaching different subjects, there is obviously a focus on play and games in learning, both physical and mental which educators today consider to be a natural medium for socialization.

"The child's social development is encouraged through play. Play is a means of discovering one's own identity, relating to others, understanding other viewpoints, learning to use symbols in thinking, and internalizing the ways of society through imitating adult roles and situations."[2]

It is true that there is an emphasis on acquiring the basic skills needed for subject matter; however, children usually acquire these basic skills through their playing and

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[2]Joseph H. Stevens and Edith W. King, Administering Early Childhood Education Program. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1976, p. 11, 12.

their working with different instructional materials. Moreover, despite the centralization of the department and its attempts to control everything in the kindergartens, there is a kind of freedom that the teachers and the children have which does not exist at any other educational level. The children can choose the topic they want to study and the teachers have the flexibility to plan for their students what they feel will be useful for them. In addition, the children are not constantly working in the class; there is a lot of outdoor work which gives them the opportunity to move freely and discover things by themselves. And, because the classes are not overcrowded, teachers find it easy to respond to every child as an individual, so that every child feels that he is important, which helps him to develop a positive self-image.

The needs, the talents, and the interests of the children are greatly regarded, which makes them feel good about themselves and become strongly motivated towards learning in school.

However, there are many negative points that affect the work in kindergartens, and that need to be changed. -The centralization of the department that has no confidence in the efficiency of the people working in the kindergartens. Despite the fact that the schools make a lot of their own decisions on a daily basis, the department tries to make even the small decisions that should be taken by the schools, ~~directions~~ directives are

sent to the kindergartens in different places to be adopted even though the schools have different environments and circumstances. It is necessary in this way that the control of the bureaucracy and the red tape be decreased, and that decision making becomes stronger at the school level.

2 - Changes in administrators in the department leading to abrupt changes in approaches and methodology. Because the department has a great concern to follow up-to-date methods, many administrators are sent to study abroad and to follow the latest methods that are adopted by the progressive countries. Those who replace the people who left have their own philosophy in education which they want to apply in the schools. And those who return after completing their studies abroad want also to apply what they have learned. In addition, many administrators are changed because they are from other Arabic countries, and their governments allow them to work in Kuwait only for a limited period, such as four or five years.

3 - The qualifications of the teachers who are not fully equipped to teach at this level. Referring to teachers and qualifications, there are not definite plans to replace the non-Kuwaiti teachers by Kuwaitis. Although the non-Kuwaiti teachers are qualified teachers, they will not understand the child and his environment as the Kuwaiti teachers would.

Since most of the Kuwaiti teachers have secondary qualifications, and they are not prepared for teaching at this level, there is a common belief that the kindergarten teachers, Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis, are inefficient. The in-service program contributes to solving this problem, but teachers still need to be trained in many areas, particularly special education.

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